

LIFE BEYOND EARTH

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by

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Who has not, at some time, stood transfixed under the midnight canopy of the heavens?--and with upward gaze speculated upon the myriads of shimmering specks of light? They seem to hang in the vast reaches of space. These great silent, luminous bodies fire the imagination. Questions flood the mind. Are these vast worlds like our own? Have they upon themselves great rolling seas, towering mountains, and bleak deserts? Are they the habitat of living, conscious beings, able to think and to reason as we do?

Such thoughts are comparatively modern in relation to the whole age of man. Before man could entertain such ideas as these, it was first necessary that he rid his mind of many of the beliefs held by his ancestors.

When the intelligence of man at some remote time was equal to his curiosity, we can presume that he then made inquiry into his origin. It was plausible that man should have doubt that he had merely sprung from the earth. Though birth may have still remained a mystery to him, yet he could perceive the difference between himself and other animate things. Furthermore, the distinction between his coming into existence and the manifestation of the plant life of his environment was apparent. Therefore, whence came man, and why? Perhaps these are the earliest questions to have plagued the human mind. Centuries of inquiring have since thrown much light upon these questions. However, even in our times they are far from free of mystery and obscurity.

The skeletal remains of the Aurignacian man have been found surrounded with a collection of utensils and weapons. The Aurignacian lived in the last part of the Middle Stone Age. This was some thirty thousand years ago! A circle of crude stones was placed about the body, and then within this circle were placed the treasured possessions of the deceased: flint knives, bone needles, and throwing sticks. There was every indication by this arrangement that there was a concept of an afterlife. In such burials as we have described were the rudiments of the belief in immortality. We must reach the conclusion that this Aurignacian man of three hundred centuries ago thought that he would live again after death, somewhere and at some time. Furthermore, he would need in this next life what had been so necessary to this one. Undoubtedly, it was for this reason that his treasured possessions were buried with him.

Certainly the Aurignacian could not believe that the corpse itself, the dead body, survived this life. An intelligence capable of having thoughts of an afterlife, as the artifacts of the Aurignacian displayed, would have observed the disintegration of bodies after death. Consequently, something other than the body itself must have suggested to him the idea of immortality. History, long following the Aurignacian man, gives the clue to the answer of what he presumed to be the

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immortality of his own being. It reveals that ancient man associated air and breath with life force. Even contemporary aborigines, as those in Australia and in the South Pacific region, confer an immortal quality upon the breath. Tyler, the noted anthropologist, in his renowned works on primitive culture, relates that the western Australians have a word for "spirit." They call it wang, but this word is to them also synonymous with their words for breath and soul. The natives of Nicaragua say that when men die a phantomlike body is seen to leave the mouth with the breath. Obviously then, the phantom has been associated with the breath of life. These Nicaraguan natives called it julio. The Hebrew word nephesh means "life," and likewise, "spirit" and "mind." We know that the Sanskrit words atman and prana mean "breath," "air," and "soul." Likewise, in Greek psyche and pneuma mean "soul" and "breath,"--in Latin, "animus" and "spiritus." All of these words, then, came to represent breath and the immortal element of man.

The locale of man's immortal being, where it resided after death, has often varied with the passing centuries. The abode of the soul, or the spirit, after death, has shifted to extremes in man's understanding. Sometimes this abode was thought to be in great caverns under the earth; at other times, it was believed to be in the reaches of the celestial realms. Apparently, however, the infinity of the sky caused it to become more commonly accepted as the realm of the soul, or the world after this one.

It is only recently that man has been able to journey into the sky. Before that, he could only speculate as to what it was actually like. We know that the ancients, as the Greeks, believed that the sky above the peaks of the towering mountains was quite different from that over the lowlands. Furthermore, these ancients were not certain whether the celestial bodies they saw at night were really quite small and close to earth, or whether they were extremely large and far distant.

The luminosity of these heavenly bodies was also very puzzling. Did they possess some eternal fire which caused their light? These people also wondered if the light of the stars might not be etheric, that is, of a divine substance of some kind. It was even suggested that the brilliance of the stars might be the result of the divine nature of the deceased humans, or that the deceased themselves were the stars. In the ancient Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom of Egypt, some five thousand years ago, the stars depicted departed human beings. In these papyri scrolls, they were referred to as "hosts of imperishable ones." It was further thought that these immortals dwelt in the sky to traverse it as did Ra, the sun-god. The Eskimos, too, have a legend that the stars were once animals and men that inhabited the earth. Even the Christian father, Origen, said that the stars were animate and that they were rational beings, because, he reasoned, it is impossible that irrational creations could move with such order in the heavens as do the stars.

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With the subsequent development of formalized theology, questions about the soul, its nature and the like, became more and more important. These questions particularly centered about the origin of the soul and its afterlife, where it went and what it did following death. The Jewish theologians conceived of man as a son of a great spiritual father. There was a relationship between this divine father and man not unlike the relationship between an earthly father and his son. In the Old Testament, we are told that this divine father selected the earth to particularly become man's habitat. According to this theology, men were not evolved beings from lesser living things. Rather, man was thought to be a spontaneous creation brought into existence in the very twinkling of an eye. Humanity was a fusion of the spiritual quality or nature of this divine father and the gross dust of the earth.

Christianity, in its most orthodox form, continues to expound the early Judaic conception of man. It, too, recognizes the duality of man, the divine quality on the one hand, and the elements of the earth on the other. At death, Christianity expounds, the immortal element, the divine quality, is separated and leaves the body. If this divine quality or element is worthy, it is then thought to ascend into what is called heaven. Heaven is a region somewhere above earth where the divine element, or the immortal part of humans, dwells indefinitely. This same theology also conceives a spontaneous creation for the whole universe as well as for man. It, too, came into existence as relatively sudden, as the snap of a finger. These ideas of creation, or cosmology, are set forth in the Book of Genesis. Prior to the year 1859, the people of Christendom felt very certain that they knew the exact time of creation. This confidence arose from the date that was indicated in the first chapter of Genesis. There we see in the margin the date, "4004 b.c." as the beginning of all existence. In fact, today, the most popular of the editions of the Bible, the St. James version, carries this same date opposite the beginning of the first chapter of Genesis.

From the foregoing, it may be plainly seen that it had been thought that the earth was chosen for the great human drama. All earthly resources, all the natural phenomena, animate and inanimate substance, were subordinated to the human ego. In the human conception, which to some extent prevails today, man is the virtual hub around which the universe revolves. Man, in his exaggerated self-consciousness and conceived supremacy, sincerely has believed that he is the incentive for all creation!

For Jews and for Christians, alike, the soul is not the result of an evolved state of consciousness. They do not think of it as being a state of sensitivity which, having developed through lesser beings, has finally reached that point where man, being aware of it, calls it soul. Rather, they contend, the soul is a kind of endowment, a kind of substance that is conferred upon man from on high. It is like some precious gem which, if he is not cautious in his use of it, may become damaged.

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St. Augustine said: "God then made man after His image, for he created him a soul by which, through reason and intelligence, he should have dominion over all things on the earth." We see in all of this the desire on the part of the human to consider himself as just beneath the eminence of God. All divine effort, everything that occurs, has been fashioned according to this viewpoint--that it is particularly for human welfare. This sort of reasoning, or lack of it, satisfies man's inherent, but not admitted, sense of inferiority to nature. He realizes his subordination to many things but refuses to admit it.

This kind of thinking influences the attitude of the masses of people toward all life's experiences. In many ways, it distorts its viewpoint. Men were, and still are, reluctant to consider any ideas, any teachings or doctrines, which tend to threaten the egocentric sense of security and supremacy which they have. At the end of the Roman period, the Christian church sought to preserve the remnants of culture. The decadent Roman civilization had degenerated most of the great culture which it had inherited from the East. Then the barbarians from the North swept down over them in a great wave of conquest. Their minds were fresh and open and the Church was easily able to indoctrinate them with such culture as it retained. However, most of the great cultures that had descended from Egypt, and from Greece, Babylonia, and Persia, had been forced underground by the Church itself. Typical of such Christian fanatics were the Emperors Justinian and Theodosius. History has left an indelible record of how they closed the great schools of philosophy and suppressed their teachings as being pagan. They ordered the destruction of the ancient temples--monuments to a tremendous culture and learning as displayed through their art and architecture. I have personally seen what the Emperor Constantine did in his campaign in Egypt. On the walls of Luxor Temple, which he considered a pagan site, he destroyed much of the beautiful art work. He had plaster smeared over it, and then had that painted with crude portraits of the saints. In one of the beautiful little sanctuaries, an equally crude and out-of-place altar was set, on which still appears an inscription honoring his name.

Let us glance at the period between 400 and 1000 A.D. This is generally referred to as the Dark Ages. This period amounted to a virtual intellectual black-out. Many of the people of this period denied that the earth is a sphere. The following is typical of their arguments: if the earth is a sphere, "no one could remain on its Southern part without falling off." It was generally thought by the masses at the time that the universe was enclosed in space, and that this space was like an envelope. Therefore, according to this conception, the universe was definitely limited in its size. They held that it was created by God, but believed to have been created not very long ago. Then, into this envelope in which the universe is contained, they thought God placed the stars and the sun and moon, but that most prominent of all was the earth. According to them, it held the unique position in this envelope. The earth was the stage for the unfoldment of the vast human drama.

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The majority of the people, too, were of the opinion that beneath the earth was a region known as "Hades" or "Hell." Outside the enclosure of the universe, this imaginary envelope which contained it, was "Heaven," the abode of God. All the saints, too, were in heaven. However, let us realize that it was believed that this abode of God and of heaven was outside of the Universe. Men expected and greatly feared that the enclosure of the universe, this envelope, was to be destroyed and this was to occur in not too remote a time. The destruction was to be by a great catastrophe, and God would either sanction such a catastrophe or he would institute it himself.

During this same period, the Arabs were inspired by their prophet, Mohammed. Fired by this new religion, a sword in one hand and the Koran in the other, they conquered the East. Yet, at the same time they became the preservers and the exponents of the ancient wisdom; they appreciated its significance. They cherished it as a treasure--the same wisdom which the West and which Christianity rejected and sought to destroy. The Mohammedans in their learning were taught the arts, sciences, and philosophy of Egypt, Greece, and Babylon.

Among the notable works that the Arabs preserved and translated was Ptolemy's Almagest. The word Almagest literally means a "collection" or "gathering." Most certainly, that is what it was because it contained all that the Greeks had gathered about astronomy since the time of Aristotle. The Almagest, as well, included Ptolemy's own astronomical and cosmological theories. This work was written during the second century A.D. The Mohammedan conquest swept westward along the Northern portion of Africa and finally it spilled over into Spain, making its first contact with the Western world. There, too, it first reached the Christian world about 1000 A.D. At that time, as now, the East and West faced each other as rivals for supremacy of the world. It was then, too, that the early Christian scholars, and they were very few in number, first received the translations of Ptolemy's Almagest, with the startling knowledge it contained. To these few scholars it was an amazing revelation; it was like cool water to a thirsty man.

At this time in Europe, signs were apparent of the beginning of the struggle of rationalism. There was an undercurrent of freedom of thought. The Crusades had not accomplished their desired end. The Church had failed in her brutal campaign in the East, which had been conducted in the name of the Cross. In fact, the Crusades, instead of bringing Christianity to the East, had really brought great foreign learning to the attention of the Crusaders. The amazing knowledge these humble and, in many cases, ignorant Western people had contacted in the East shook their faith in the bigoted views of the Church. These Christians found that the East was not as ignorant as they had been taught. They found that the Easterners were not sniveling cowards as had been alleged. Many of the Crusaders returned with great zeal for the new knowledge they had experienced. This zeal had been stimulated by the magnificent art, the great architecture, and the inspiring literature which had been revealed to them during the Crusades.

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Abelard, a French scholastic philosopher of the twelfth century, boldly criticized the scholasticism of the Church. The Church had sought to confine all knowledge merely to dialectical arguments concerning its own dogmas; men were not allowed to go beyond the doctrines of the Church. Their analyses, their thoughts, were limited merely to splitting hairs about these dogmas. The situation was like that of a child with a number of building blocks. All that he could do was to continue to rearrange these same building blocks. Abelard declared that it is not ungodly, it is not unchristian, to doubt and to wonder, nor to seek beyond what we now possess in the way of knowledge.

More and more the men of the West turned to the writings of Aristotle, for, to them, Aristotle seemed to open the door to a vast world of learning. The Church was alarmed at this, but it could not stem the surge toward rationalism. It could not dampen the ardor for knowledge. Finally, the Church decided upon a saving and very adroit move. It found that by making relatively slight changes and deletions in the writings of Aristotle, points which were not quite consistent with its dogma, it could then adopt Aristotle's writings wholeheartedly. It had previously used Aristotle's logic, but had now taken into its embrace his entire science, with of course certain deletions to its own advantage. It then declared that Aristotle stood for the acme of all knowledge. It was intended that men would seek no further than Aristotle; they should not go on and on but should be confined to Aristotle.

Since the Church now appeared to be liberal, ostensibly so, at least, many persons ceased their independent inquiries and returned to the Church and those teachings of Aristotle which it extended. Actually, the Church had made Aristotle become the limitation of knowledge in order to serve its own restriction of man's mind. The Church sought to keep men's minds harnessed to what she, alone, doled out. Thus, Aristotle, once the great light of knowledge, had now become, through this method, an instrument for the suppression of knowledge.

Some thinkers, however, resented any restrictions being placed upon them. They resented any subjects or any classification of knowledge as being a boundary for their thoughts, and they continued in increasing numbers their independent search. The postulations of St. Thomas Aquinas once again saved the Church's position. Aquinas made a definite distinction between faith on the one hand, and reason on the other. In substance, he declared that in the temporal world, in the world of science, men should and must use reason, and without limitation. Conversely, however, in divine matters, there blind faith and belief transcend reason. Thus, Christians must not at any time apply reason to the theology of the Church. This permitted men a pursuit of knowledge in worldly fields. They were free to participate in any science and the Church could help them in that regard. On the other hand, however, it bound men not to question with reason the doctrines or the dogmas of the Church. Today, this continues to be one of the basic precepts of the Roman Catholic Church.

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On February 19, 1473, Nicholas Copernicus was born. He was a man to shake the smug import which men had attached to themselves and which they had assigned to earth. He entered the University of Cracow in the year 1491. Later he studied law, astronomy, and medicine in Bologna and Padua, Italy. In 1500, he was called to Rome to occupy the Chair of Mathematics. In about 1507, he began to believe that the earth moved about the sun, and worked on the exposition of this theory until the time of his death. He delayed publicizing his theory because he feared, and rightly so, the Church's charging him with heresy.

If the earth is the center of the universe, then man, by residing on the earth, might well be the principal object of God's attention. In fact, the theology of the Church had long taken this position. Man is important in the universe because the earth is important. The earth's existence as the center of the universe and its being the human habitat would make man the principal object of God's attention. On the other hand, suppose the earth is only one of the planets and that it is not the largest! In such a case there would be no reason to believe that man is so important in the scheme of the universe. It was along these lines that the Church subsequently attacked Copernicus. He was charged with belittling the dignity of man and his divine status by postulating a theory that the earth was not the center of the universe. Copernicus died May 24, 1543, just as his heliocentric theory (the sun as the center of the universe) was being published.

We cannot dwell here upon the marvels of the reasoning of Copernicus. It is necessary, though, that we touch briefly on a few of the highlights. Copernicus suggested that the universe is spherical because the sphere is the perfect whole. The sphere, he contended, is unjointed and it is most capacious. He also stated that everything tries to attain the form of a sphere: drops of water as well as other fluids, even the heavenly bodies appear to be spherical. It is amazing that Copernicus was making statements which are contiguous to points in the modern doctrine of relativity. He declared that movement depends upon relationship of the observer to the object. If the observer, on the one hand, and the object, on the other, are moving together at the same velocity, then the movement is not noticed. For analogy, if we are riding in a train, and another train is beside us, traveling at the same rate of speed, neither we nor the other train seem to be moving. The canopy of the heavens, Copernicus said, does not move; the planets do, however. At times these planets seem to be at varying distances from the earth: sometimes closer, sometimes farther. Thus, it would appear that their dependence--because of this variation--is upon some body other than the earth. He proposed that the sun was most probably the center of the attraction of these planets.

Unfortunately, available knowledge was insufficient at that time to support Copernicus' theory. It required another great thinker, as profound and as courageous as he, to provide the empirical proof for the Copernican Theory. This man was Galileo, born in Pisa, February 18, 1564. We note that Galileo was born in the same month but one day earlier than Copernicus--though ninety-one years later. His father had

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destined him for the profession of medicine. The older Galileo was a mathematician, but desired his son not to pursue the same profession. Nevertheless, young Galileo chose his father's profession of mathematics.

After appointment to the University of Pisa, Galileo devoted himself to a study of the laws of motion. One of the first things which he did was to disprove Aristotle's theory that objects fall at a speed proportionate to their weight. Aristotle had presumed that all heavy objects fall at a greater speed than lighter ones and no one had ever taken the time nor the trouble to find out whether that was true. Galileo demonstrated that objects fall alike, regardless of their weight, if they are not impeded by air or other conditions. His doctrine of inertia was an outstanding contribution to science. He proved that bodies when once set in motion remain so, and that they continue in the same direction, the only exception being the possibility of their having been affected in some way by other forces. This doctrine of inertia refuted the claims of the anti-Copernicans. They had attacked Copernicus especially on the grounds that, if the earth revolved about the sun, as he had claimed, then objects thrown into the air would remain suspended in air.

Contrary to general opinion, Galileo did not invent the telescope; rather, he perfected the first one, made it much more efficient. In 1610, using one of these early instruments, he proved that the Milky Way was not a solid mass of light but consisted of myriads of stars. Likewise, he demonstrated that Venus has sides and he used this as an argument to show that Venus revolved about the sun. In 1613, Galileo began to show his support of the Copernican Theory. Immediately, he was warned by the Catholic theologians not to teach, defend, or expound the Copernican doctrine--that such was heresy. In spite of this, Galileo published in 1632 his Dialogues on Systems of the World. This was nothing more than a thinly disguised definition of the teachings of Copernicus which had intrigued him and aroused a great admiration. The book became the best seller of its time. It was exceedingly popular among the intelligent, inquiring minds.

A year later, as a result of that publication, Galileo was called before the Church's Inquisition. Following the hypocritical trial, he was forced to recant his views. He died January 8, 1642. Strangely enough, this was the very day that Sir Isaac Newton was born, and who came to carry on where Galileo left off. It is also significant that the dates of the birth and death of Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, men so much alike, men who brought new knowledge to the world of mental darkness, were so unusually linked together.

Copernicus and Galileo became the champions, or, we may say, the heroes of all those who sought to break with the old theological restrictions. Men were fired with the thought of a vast, infinite universe. They were thrilled by their conception of a cosmic kinship between all the heavenly bodies, and the earth's being one of a family of such bodies.

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Giordano Bruno, born 1548 (?) and burned at stake in 1600, was an outstanding representative of this new spirit, of this new fired imagination. To him, the universe was alive; it was a great organism, like a vast cell through which pulsed a mind, an intelligence. Life was possible elsewhere, rather than just on earth. The pattern of conscious beings was no longer to be limited nor was it designed for just one celestial sphere.

Bruno said: "Only one bereft of reason could believe that those infinite spaces, tenanted by vast and magnificent bodies, are designed only to give us light, or to receive the clear shining of the earth." In substance, he reasoned that even if the whole universe were accepted as being one starry globe, and the sun and moon made only for earth and for man, as many were wont to believe, would not such conception in exalting humanity abase God by its limitations on His Powers?

Bruno also said: "What, is a feeble human creation the only object worthy of the care of God? In extending the universe as men are now inclined to do and in pushing out its boundaries or in denying that it has boundaries, men are not abandoned by God. Rather, man becomes elevated, because he has the pride, the privilege of realizing himself as a segment of a vaster universe. Intelligence was no longer to be confined to a region beneath the sky, to the atmospheric bounds of our own world. Men now were to be brothers with intelligence everywhere, no matter where it existed. They were to be united with all of God's expressions.

It is not necessary or appropriate to enter into a comprehensive discussion of the Rosicrucian conception of life. It is sufficient without revealing confidential matters, to say that the Rosicrucians understand life to be a unity of two primary cosmic forces. One of these is the essence of energy which underlies all matter, or substance. And this, then, is wedded with another cosmic energy--the consequence of which is the phenomena we know as "life." The forms of life may be varied and innumerable, but the essence of life is the same in all forms.

The Rosicrucians have long claimed, and in their teachings have made the point quite comprehensible, that there is a universal substratum--are we to presume that life alone is limited to earth? Figuratively, is life to be confined as a phenomenon to the head of a pin? After all, this globe is no more than the head of a pin in an infinite sea of an infinite number of worlds. We know that matter, even here on earth, is not always receptive to life. It is not always prepared to wed that other primary cosmic essence, out of which unity, life comes forth. However, whenever the conditions are favorable, a wedding of the two cosmic forces occurs, resulting in life. It is not conceivable that our small globe alone has been designed for the phenomenon of life. In fact, each day there are new discoveries which make it less probable that life is a mere caprice, or a chance manifestation on earth. That unity which is life is possible wherever conditions are favorable to it. The manner of our earth's formation and its development must be common to other bodies in the other

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universes as well. In the infinity of time, there must be other bodies that have been the locale, and that are now the habitat of life and of intelligence.

Just as all objects do not cast the same shadow, so too, all forms of life elsewhere would not be the same. Life on other worlds would necessarily portray, in its form and organic development, its environmental influences. In some instances, such life would be less intelligent than man; in others, it might exceed that of homo sapiens. Intelligence is an attribute of life. Its development depends upon its exposure to environmental conditions.

There is not reason to believe that other beings would have the same sense receptors that we do. For example, the eyes, the ears, and nose are an outgrowth of an organism's adjustment to its earthly, physical surroundings. They are essential to its welfare. In fact, they are a product of such surroundings. For analogy, if we take a soft ball of clay and press against its two sides two hard objects, what are the results? The clay ball on those two sides begins to assume the contour of the objects pressed against it. It adapts itself, in other words, to its environment, to the forces with which it is brought in touch. So, too, life elsewhere would have its sense organs, its whole organism, conform and be of a nature necessary to its environment. It is, then, quite possible that the sense faculties and organs of intelligent beings elsewhere would be quite unlike ours. This might make it very difficult for a common medium of communication to develop between conscious beings elsewhere and ourselves.

In our times, man has proved and taken out of the realm of speculation the fact that there is a unity of many forces in the universe. We have been shown that elements which are common to the earth exist elsewhere. These chemical elements, heated to a gaseous state, produce what is known as a bright line spectra. This is a series of bright lines which appear against a black surface. It has been found that the bright lines of these incandescent elements all have specific wave lengths. This means that they have definite vibratory rates, which rates are invariable. The bright line spectra of distant stars correspond to those of the earth's elements. We know, therefore, that other worlds have a similar composition to that of the earth. This method for determining the spectra of stars and all their elements is known as spectroscopy.

Bruno said that there is a soul that is common to the whole universe. He meant by this that the universe is alive with a permeating intelligence. All living things have a self-consciousness, a condition of being aware of themselves. As a conscious being is aware of self and of this universal intelligence, to that same degree it has possession of the soul. Thus, earth and man have no monopoly over soul. Man shares soul as a Cosmic phenomenon with beings yet unknown to him.

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